

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 06366 141432Z

43

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01

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S E C R E T BANGKOK 6366

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MARR, TH

SUBJ: RTG CONCERN OVER EVACUEES/ESCAPEES FROM CAMBODIA

1.CHARGE, ACCOMPANIED BY ADCM, MET MORNING APRIL 13 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN AT LATTER'S REQUEST. ALSO PRESENT ON THAI SIDE WERE SUPREME COMMAND CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL KRIANGSAK, MFA UNDER SECRETARY PHAEN, AND MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS KOSON. SUBJECTS WERE: A) PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN DEALING WITH EVACUEES/ESCAPEES FROM CAMBODIA; AND B) CURRENT PROSPECTS FOR KHMER REPUBLIC (SEPTTEL).

2. DISCUSSION OF EVACUEE/ESCAPEE QUESTION NOT SURPRISINGLY SHOWED LACK OF COORDINATION AMONG THAI WHO INTERSPERSED STATEMENTS OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES WITH HIGHLY SPECIFIC REQUESTS AND DEMANDS. KRIANGSAK, IN APPARENT BID TO TAKE CONTROL FROM MFA, EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH PROCEDURES FOLLOWED UP TO NOW IN HANDLING REFUGEES BROUGHT FROM CAMBODIA TO THAILAND BY US. HE ASSERTED SUPREME COMMAND INTENT TO EXERCISE COMPLETE CONTROL OVER ANY CAMBODIAN AIRCRAFT, PARTICULARLY KAF AIRCRAFT, AND ANY PASSENGERS ON BOARD SUCH AIRCRAFT, ENTER-
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 06366 141432Z

ING THAILAND IN FUTURE. BY END OF DISCUSSION, IT

APPEARED THAT SUPREME COMMAND HAD BEEN LARGELY SUCCESSFUL IN BID TO GET COORDINATING CONTROL OF ENTIRE OPERATION. CHATCHAI PLAYED RELATIVELY PASSIVE ROLE IN DISCUSSION AND LEFT LEAD TO KRIANGSAK. ONLY PHAEN FROM THE MFA SIDE MILDLY NOTED ROLE OF CIVIL BUREAUCRACY IN RELEVANT PROCEDURES.

3. MAIN POINTS EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION WERE AS FOLLOWS:

- A) THAI WISH TO PLAY, OR LEAST APPEAR TO PLAY, MORE ACTIVE CONTROLLING ROLE IN ENTIRE EVACUATION/ REFUGEE OPERATION THAN THEY HAVE BEEN WILLING TO PLAY UP TO NOW. WE WELCOME THIS IF THEY INDEED DO IT.
- B) THAI ARE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO CREATION OF NEW RESIDENT REFUGEE GROUP HERE AND ARE APPLYING PRESSURE ON US TO MOVE OUT THOSE WE BRING HERE, INCLUDING VIPS, IMMEDIATELY.
- C) THAI WANT CAMBODIANS, EXCEPT FOR HANDFUL OF GENUINE VIPS, TO BE KEPT IN GROUP IN CAMP AT UTAPAO UNTIL MOVED OUT OF COUNTRY. (GREAT MAJORITY OF THEM ARE ALREADY IN CAMP.)
- D) THAI ARE GENUINELY AND ACTIVELY CONCERNED ABOUT HANDLING OF KHMER AIR FORCE AIRCRAFT IN THAILAND. THEY FEAR THESE AIRCRAFT MIGHT EVENTUALLY END UP IN K.C. HANDS AND HAVE PROVISIONALLY DECIDED TO PREVENT ANY THAT ARRIVE IN THAILAND FROM LEAVING.

4. CHARGE ASSURED THAI SIDE THAT EMBASSY HAD BEEN COOPERATING AND WOULD CONTINUE TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH RTG AND THAT OUR VIEWS WERE COMPLETELY CONSISTENT WITH THEIRS. WE ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR REMOVAL FROM THAILAND OF ALL PERSONS BROUGHT HERE FROM CAMBODIA BY US. WE AGREED THAT CONTROL OVER KHMER AIR FORCE PLANES ENTERING THAILAND WAS TOTALLY MATTER FOR RTG. WE ALSO ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE THAT THIRD-COUNTRY EMBASSIES SHOULD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR NATIONALS. (IN THAT CONNECTION, CHARGE NOTED THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH A NUMBER OF THIRD-COUNTRY AMBASSADORS AND THAT THEIR EMBASSIES WERE ALREADY INVOLVED IN SITUATION.)

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 06366 141432Z

5. IT WAS DECIDED THAT, SINCE EMERGENCY PHASE OF EVACUATION WAS NOW OVER, THAI AND US SIDES WOULD MEET APRIL 14 TO PREPARE DETAILED WRITTEN PROCEDURES COVERING MATTERS DISCUSSED.

6. COMMENT: THAI POSITION IS MIXTURE OF SHADOW AND SUBSTANCE. THAI ARE IN FACT CONCERNED ABOUT

KAF AIRCRAFT, EARLY DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND OF ALL REFUGEES, AND TREATMENT OF CAMBODIAN VIPS. THEY ALSO WISH TO AVOID IMPRESSION OF US FREE-WHEELING IN THAILAND (WHICH WE HAVE METICULOUSLY SOUGHT TO AVOID). ON OTHER HAND, KRIANGSAK'S VAUGE COMPLAINTS ABOUT LACK OF INFORMATION ARE SOMEWHAT SPECIOUS. WE HAVE KEPT BOTH SUPREME COMMAND AND MFA INFORMED OF FAST MOVING EVENTS AS SOON AS WE COULD FIND APPROPRIATE THAI TO TALK TO. THAI IMMIGRATION HAS BEEN HANDLING PROCESSING OF ARRIVALS AT UTAPAO FROM OUTSET, AND ROYAL THAI NAVY HAS BEEN OBSERVING WHAT WENT ON THERE. COOPERATION FROM THAI IN GENERAL HAS BEEN EXCELLENT.

7. ONE ELEMENT IN THIS DEVELOPMENT IS BUREAUCRATIC: SUPREME COMMAND IS IRRITATED THAT MFA HAS BEEN MOVING INTO MORE ACTIVE ROLE ON EVACUATION SITUATION. IT IS ALSO TO BE NOTED THAT THAI DEMAND FOR GREATER INVOLVEMENT COMES AT TIME WHEN LARGE PART OF EVACUATION ACTION IS OVER. IN ANY CASE, WE ARE ENCOURAGING ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF ANY THAI WHO WANTS TO GET IN ON THIS OPERATION AND WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH THAI IN PROVIDING COMPLETE AND DETAILED INFORMATION ON ALL ASPECTS OF EVACUEE/ REFUGEE OPERATION.

8. IT IS ALSO WORTH NOTING THAT DURING MEETING, CHATCHAI RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT, WHO CHATCHAI SAID WAS VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN SUBJECT. AT CONCLUSION OF MEETING, CHATCHAI REFERRED AGAIN TO KHUKRIT'S INTEREST AND IMPLIED THAT HOLDING OF MEETING TO ELABORATE DETAILED PROCEDURES WAS NEEDED BY THAI FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PURPOSES, AND ALSO TO FEND
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BANGKO 06366 141432Z

OFF POLITICAL OPPOSITION. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAI OBSTRUCTIONISM AS LONG AS THAI ARE CONVINCED WE REALLY DO INTEND TO REMOVE ALL THOSE WE BROUGHT HERE FROM CAMBODIA.
MASTERS

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